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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH SOMALI PRIME MINISTER
GEDI

Classified By: Poloff Lisa Peterson, Reasons 1.4 (B), (C), and (D).

1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Ambassador Bellamy met Somali Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi on April 6 at the Residence. Gedi offered an up-beat account of developments within the TFIs, especially the work of parliamentary committees in Baidoa. He also worried about the recent fighting in Mogadishu. The Ambassador informed Gedi of our efforts to reach out to Ayr community leaders. Gedi advised that he would be meeting with this group as well. The Ambassador emphasized that our actions are focused on foreign terrorists/extremists and those individuals sheltering them, not the Ayr community as a whole. Ambassador added that our near term objective is to deal with a handful of non-Somali terrorists in Mogadishu and at the same time build support for the TFIs. Gedi requested greater cooperation and coordination on piracy issues, noting that the business community was losing its ability to operate. He also noted that Radio HornAfrik needs protection to continue its operations in Mogadishu. Gedi was poised, showing no sign of concern about persistent rumors of political moves against him. That said, a clear request to be consulted on activities like those in Mogadishu likely derives from a desire to strengthen his credentials. END SUMMARY.

2. (S/NF) Ambassador was accompanied by SIMO chief and staff members, political officer, and Somalia PD officer. Gedi was accompanied by his Nairobi liaison officer Mohamed Ali Nur (Americo).

3. (C) Gedi offered a summary of developments within Somalia. Parliament had thus far formed 14 commissions and training sessions had been set up for parliamentarians in Baidoa. Gedi believed these activities were proceeding well. There were currently 3,500 militiamen camped outside Baidoa who lacked shelter, food, and other basic needs, but the international community had begun coming forward with offers of support for such needs. The National Security and Stabilization Plan (NSSP) had been discussed at a workshop in Naivasha and would be the subject of an experts meeting, drawing in 15 representatives of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) as well as Somali and international experts, April 17 and 18 in Nairobi. Gedi offered to provide a draft of the plan for USG feedback.

4. (C) The situation in Mogadishu, Gedi said, remains tense, with the population there in a negative mood toward the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism (ARPCT) because of the perception that its actions were against Islam. The TFG did not want to support one side or the other in this conflict and saw a clear need to avoid creating the appearance of clan warfare. Gedi said he had been waiting to hear the US. position on the fighting in Mogadishu. While the TFG was not yet strong, it could provide assistance in such circumstances. He noted that the TFG could have offered inputs during the formation of the Alliance. Unfortunately, the uncoordinated approach to the fighting in Mogadishu had made it possible for extremists to characterize the fighting as anti-Islam.

5. (S/NF) The Ambassador reminded Gedi of increasing extremist activity over the past year in Mogadishu, an issue we had discussed on previous occasions. The USG focus, he said, has not changed - it is very much on the Al Qaida presence and the handful of Somalis who protect them. He informed Gedi of the Mission's meetings with Ayr sub-clan leaders, in which we had advised the leaders that we knew of Ayr community members who were sheltering Al Qaida operatives. Gedi advised that he would be meeting the Ayr leaders the following day. He knew of concerns among the Ayr that the whole community is believed to be associated with Al Qaida. Gedi said it was important to point fingers specifically at those responsible for the chaos in Mogadishu, not the community as a whole. The Ambassador fully agreed and assured Gedi that we are sensitive to public opinion in Mogadishu and are evaluating recent events there to determine if other approaches would be more appropriate.

Piracy

6. (C) Gedi raised the issue of piracy, saying the business community was losing its ability to operate. Gedi was aware

of and grateful for US. efforts to intercept the recently hijacked South Korean fishing vessel (which, he noted, may have been fishing illegally). The Ambassador noted that we may at some point need to discuss the possibility of pursuit within Somalia's 12-mile territorial limit. Gedi began to edge toward making a request for establishing a Somali coast guard, but the Ambassador steered him instead in the direction of taking legal action against those on land who are profiting from piracy. Joint efforts on land and sea would put pressure on the entire piracy enterprise and potentially bring a success to the TFG that would rally business support for the government. Gedi agreed to the Ambassador's suggestion that a small USG-TFG working group be set up to examine the feasibility of bilateral cooperation against the piracy threat. Gedi further agreed to look into whether prison facilities in Puntland might be utilized for holding pirates and whether Somalia's few judicial authorities might be able to play a role in prosecuting piracy.

Appeal for the Media

17. (S/NF) Gedi appealed for help to Radio HornAfrik. The broadcaster had opened a branch in Baidoa, but within three days had been shut down by warlords Mohammed Ibrahim Habsade and Adan Saransoor. The station's operations in Mogadishu now need protection, which the TFG is not able to provide. SIMO chief stated that if the Ayr clan could address the problems emerging from the Ifqahane Islamic court and the foreign extremists affiliated thereto, HornAfrik would be able to broadcast freely. The extremists are currently well-positioned to disseminate disinformation. The TFG needs to act to counter this disinformation.

Parting Thoughts

18. (C) In a private comment to the Ambassador, Gedi said while he wanted to work with some members of the Alliance and other groups in Mogadishu to create a critical mass of warlords, militias and political groups willing to bring stability to the capital, President Yusuf is much more focused on bringing in foreign troops either to isolate or occupy the capital. The Ambassador assured Gedi that we opposed the introduction of foreign troops at this time as we well recognized the inflammatory effect it would have.

19. (C) Gedi noted that the parliament will remain in Baidoa and the government in Jowhar. Gedi insisted that, aside from the issue of foreign troops, he actually had few serious differences with President Yusuf. He added, however, that he views the President as more a ceremonial figurehead and himself as the actual operational head of government with a responsibility for ensuring that parliament worked.

COMMENT

10. (S/NF) Gedi was poised and polished, at times presenting the TFG as if it were on its way to becoming a well-oiled machine (which it clearly is not). His comments about having few differences with Yusuf are seriously exaggerated. We believe the two men are having real difficulty finding common ground. It is interesting that Gedi described parliamentary speaker Hassan as an ally (and someone with whom he planned to travel soon to the US at the invitation of the National Democratic Institute.

11. (S/NF) His concerns about the unfolding of events in Mogadishu seemed to be more about the failure to include either him personally or the TFG as a whole while actions were being planned than about the nature of the actions themselves. In spite of ongoing rumors of potential moves against him, Gedi showed no sign of concern about his position in government, focusing on the steps necessary to get institutions up and running. However, his desire to be consulted on Mogadishu events is likely more about strengthening his own credentials than about asserting the authority of the TFG. END COMMENT.

BELLAMY